DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 762 08 AC 012 875

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TITLE Data Collection with Low-Income Respondents.
INSTITUTION State Univ. of New York, Ithaca. Agricultural Education Div. at Cornell Univ.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at Adult Education Research Conference (Chicago, April 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Data; *Data Collection; Economically Disadvantaged; *Information Seeking; Rural Areas

ABSTRACT

A series of data collection and general methodological needs which were encountered in the course of research study on the communication and value patterns of the rural poor, as part of Northeast Regional Project (NE-68) "Paths Out of Poverty" are given. Section headings include: Data Collection: Design and Testing; Data Collection-Field Work; Recruitment and Hiring of Interviewers; Training of Interviewers; Use of Indigenous Interviewers; Research and Community Development. (NF)

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DATA COLLECTION WITH LOW-INCOME RESPONDENTS

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This paper is based on New York State Project 370 a contributing project to Northeast Regional Project NE-68. It was presented at the Adult Education Research Conference, Chicago, April, 1972.

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This paper is in response to a series of data collection and general methodological needs which were encountered in the course of a research study on the communication and value patterns of the rural poor.[1]

In addition to the usual difficulties of reaching a low-income audience and obtaining valid responses, it was limited by a self-imposed broadening of objectives, i.e. the study would seek to incorporate civic needs without biasing the findings or changing the basic nature of its research objectives. In fact, any civic contribution would be limited in that we were not entering the community as community development workers with long-term community project goals and resources, but rather as researchers with predetermined study and time scopes. This, therefore, was not a research-action study.

Action research stems from a community need with objectives geared toward immediate practical application of findings within a specific, limited setting. Research specialists, volunteers or lay participants function through processes of group planning, execution and evaluation with a view toward stimulating and developing skills, awareness, new values, etc. As a developmental design, "hypotheses and method are subject to modification during the course of the action program" (Good, 1959).

In the data collection model (hereafter called "R-CD" because of its Research-Community Development components reviewed below), the subject matter may be initially unrelated to the target community goals. The study is not initiated by that community or a specific community development program. The Model does not permit flexibility in the study's basic direction (and in this sense the original study is "held constant), and finally, community

development methods are conditioned by the research project's flexibility during the data collection-field work stages.

This paper will focus on the plans, impediments and the R-CD Model developed during each of eight stages in the research process: planning and setting of objectives; data collection, design and testing (includes questionnaire construction and pretesting); reconnaissance; recruitment; training; enumeration; analysis; and follow-up. Stages three through six will be grouped under "data collection-field work" for purposes of clarification.

Planning and Formulating Objectives

Original Problem and Hypothesis: Communicating with the Poor

Well-planned and well-documented projects are constantly faced with unwilling audiences, meaningless commitments, negation, even apathy. They become dead-end programs, unacceptable to the people living in poverty. What, then, is acceptable? What strategies, that will not be perceived as impossible by the poor, will be effective in resolving poverty?

"Neighbors Helping Neighbors"[2] proceeded from the assumption that these difficulties in communicating effectively with the poor (i.e. persuading them to undertake actions believed to be good for them) may have their basis in something other than failure to reach them or their inability to understand the message (Smathers, 1970).

An individual, upon receiving a message, assigns meanings to it, makes judgments about (a) the nature of the action called for and (b) his response. Both the outcome of these meanings and judgments will be influenced by the criteria used, the order and method of their application and by affect.

While it had been conventional for studies of communication to focus on the transmission and receipt of the message and on the capacity of the recipient to assign meaning to that message, less attention had been given to the differences among populations regarding three elements of the message judgment: (1) process, (2) criteria, and (3) influence patterns of value and environmental systems. Our study focused on the rural poor with respect to the above "judgment" questions.

There also was a problem associated with executing a study regarding low-income families. Faulty change-oriented communication, emphasized in the literature and in rural poverty agency feedback, pointed out the difficulties we would have in locating and reaching the poor. Field work methodology and data collection techniques would have to be carefully planned, sensitized and evaluated.

The following set of abstractions drawn from readings and observations over several years served as a framework for the study:

1. Values of the Rural Poor
   a. Practicality and improvisation, behavioral tendencies of the rural poor, indicate the functioning of protestant ethic values. The poor are thus constant maximizers with cognitive strength fostered by their poverty.
   b. The Douglah-Roycraft (1967) and Rushing (1970) conclusions about farm population are probably also true with the non-farm rural poor:--"Rural people who live under what are generally considered deprived conditions do not necessarily perceive other families in the community as being deprived." Rushing suggests that "it is perhaps against rural people's values to admit

conditions of poverty, or that present criteria used for differentiating high and low social economic groups are not applicable to rural areas."

c. Cognitive aspects of rural poverty value orientation are consistent with affective components, though inconsistent with behavior. The resulting state is due to structural, circumstantial, and highly environmental circumstances rather than cognitive defectiveness. (See Hovland, 1953; Rosenberg et al., 1960.)

2. Information Processing by the Rural Poor

a. Culture holds a contextual importance in any communication network. "A given culture operates in such a way as to select and filter stimuli by focusing attention on various things, events and ideas within a given social order" (Barwind and Bruce, 1970). Thus messages received are approached selectively with not all aspects of the message being accorded the same amount of importance or relevance. Further, it is possible that--to the degree that communicator and audience represent different cultures--the attention of each may be focused on different aspects of the message.

b. It is also possible that the rural poor as an audience are "programmed" by their experience to handle information differently from their middle-class counterparts. They may differ in the number of values which are applied simultaneously in judging a message and in whether the values are applied as continuous or as discontinuous variables. Unrecognized discrepancies between audience behavior and communicator expectations could inhibit communication even though the values themselves are either shared or correctly perceived.

3. Communicator-Receiver Interactions

   a. The value framework of the communicator and rural poor respondent may differ, through not necessarily to the degree that it would hamper the receiving of messages. The values of the receiver might, however, cause non-achievement of the message's purpose, which is to promote change. This may be true because (1) the action called for may be contrary to the values of the audience; (2) the promised results of the action may be contrary to the values of the audience; or (3) promised results of the action may have no value to the audience in its own terms.

   b. The value differences might also affect communication strategy preferences, both from communicator to respondent and vice versa.

Introducing Community Development

The original research problem was then posed in a second dimension: What could the research effort contribute to the well-being of the target community?

One common procedure in community studies is to contact and relate to appropriate agency personnel and/or selected leaders in a target community in order to arrange for sampling units from their constituency and for a host of other reasons.[3] These efforts result in some type of contamination effect similar to that found between respondent and interviewer (Kaplan, 1964),[4] which we have defined as "reconnaissance contamination."

Since both types and even "piggy-backing"[5] are likely to be inevitable, it was necessary to explore other constructive uses of these relationships. Furthermore, was there any phase of the project

which could be maximized or slightly wedged open without distorting the nature of our study? Could we in fact make the data collected, the information and ideas introduced in the data collection process and even the act of collecting data serve some immediate community goals and lay the groundwork for further community development?

The Final Objectives

Community-oriented objectives were added both at the initial planning stages and after field work conta[illegible], while research objectives received major priority as follows:

1. To develop insight, find and describe variables, and evoke hypotheses on (a) the life styles, strengths, coping and communication patterns, as well as the impact of environment on values of the rural poor with emphasis on the non-farm marginal[6] population (b) means of reaching and communicating with these audiences (and to evaluate our own tools and methods).
2. To obtain some palpable comparative data on the values, attitudes and strategies of rural change agents.
3. To translate findings into practical communication guidelines for Extension Services and other change-oriented agencies.
4. To determine whether the communication content and strategies recommended by the poor are similar to those utilized by the communicator, i.e. explore differences between expected value/attitude--perspective of communicator and the actual perspective of receiver, determining the extent of that difference and its implications for the development of future materials.
5. To explore the means of developing content which because of its perceived relevance to the poor, would reach them.

6. Explore and utilize ways in which a research study could be maximized in terms of its relevance to the rural poor and their community.

7. Complete a brief service directory of persons to call for information/emergencies.

Objectives added as a result of the involvement achieved in the data collection phase of the study include:

8. To report findings to volunteer community leaders in target area for their use in program planning.

9. Complete a compilation found in the study on helpful hints (to be distributed by the interviewers to all respondents).

This paper will attempt to discuss only objectives 1(b), 6, 8 and 9.

Definitions

Given the conceptual definitions, constraints of the study's framework, and the mixture of research and community development objectives, operational definitions had to provide appropriate data for fulfilling research objectives and--if possible--also yield a tangible contribution toward community development objectives. An example of our maximizing this phase of the study is in the defining of "values," where the following conceptual definition was our basis:

Values: "We are concerned with values as observable variables of human conduct, not with an appraisal of various values being as better or worse than others nor with the meaning and ontological status of value as a concept, however important these problems may be" (Williams, 1951).

Values had been defined as important conceptual aspects of life condition considered by the individual as essential to his well being with situations devised to represent those values (Woodruff, nd). In general they had been defined as standards, that which is desired, that which is desirable.

In the context of this study, values provided the criteria by which messages are judged. Hence, they serve as a sort of screen through which communications must pass. The capacity on the part of the communicator or communicating system to predict the nature of this screen will greatly affect its capacity to develop effective messages. Furthermore, in order to avoid some common pitfalls of clinical studies, values were generally regarded as a "continuum" rather than an all or none matter (Williams, 1951).

The operational definition became: Choice behavior. It appeared to be the best available indicator of values (Solomon, 1957):

1. Choice self behavior (what I do--how I resolve this problem).
2. Choice other behavior (what she does--how she handles her problem).
3. Verbalized ideal other choice behavior (what she should do--advice).
4. What is essential for my well being (my choice behavior--what I should do, etc.).
5. Justification for behavior (why I do it).

By later defining indigenous communication patterns as "the interaction strategies and content utilized by the rural poor in giving advise and trying to change behavior of other poor (neighbors, friends, strangers)," we were able to utilize the results as helpful hints for redistribution among respondents. Each low-income resident could thereby feel that his answers were useful for community purposes, thus opening up the experience of community contribution.

Other Operational Definitions

Community Leadership: The following definition became operational because of time and budget limitations: (It also provided maximum leverage in (a) reaching and communicating with the poor and (b) community development)

Immediately accessible middle class "formal leadership,"[7] with a reputation for working with and helping the poor by participating in or utilizing an institution.

Data Collection: Design and Testing

Research Design

Previous literature reinforced by our experience indicated that the shift in rural setting, changes in the low-income population make up from farm to non-farm, growth of the urban-rural continuum due to communication increases and other linkage phenomena, and communication patterns among the low-income families now in the rural areas had not been sufficiently explored to provide concrete hypothetical basis for an experimental study of the conventional sort. Thus the first step toward understanding low-income rural values and inter-communication patterns would have to be exploratory.

Our basic design is outlined below:

A. Low-Income Population

1. General approach

   a. Selection and study of a rural county with low (approximately $2,000) per capita income.

   b. Use of referral method in order to reach unaffiliated or invisible poor. (Respondents would be asked to recommend neighbors, friends.)[8]

c. Use of non-threatening interviewers.

2. Data collection tools.

Open-ended and some short-answer questions--generally unstructured questionnaire. Language of the questions would be carefully geared to the target population and adjusted according to pretest findings.

B. The Communicator

1. General approach

a. Selection of materials considered excellent by low-income paraprofessionals in extension programs (Kira, 1969).

b. Telephone interviews with writers of those materials.

c. Focus on content words and images, i.e., techniques.

2. Data collection tools

a. Quasi-structured questionnaire sent by mail to respondents.

b. Open-ended interview.

Pretest Insights: Questionnaire Construction, Equipment and Interviewer Needs

The methodology of this study evolved from repeated analysis and reanalysis of the research problem, interspersed with pretests at three different locations. (See Table 1 for an evaluation of results.) There were several reasons for this: our intention to be pre-theoretical, our fear of securing falsified data, and our desire to build as much low-income community suggestions into the research as possible.

As a deliberately pre-theoretical study, it was necessary that theoretical assumptions have a minimum effect on the data collected. This dictated the use of techniques which would elicit open responses

Table 1.--Pretest with the Rural Poor: Consequences of Varied Instrumentation.

Instrumentation	Pretest I (Vermont)		Pretest II (Tioga)		Pretest III (County "Y")	
	Description	Results	Description	Results	Description	Results
Interviewer	Faculty Graduate students	Respondents identified interviewer with agency	Graduate community worker with poverty background	Depended on mode of access--some respondents identified her as a social worker. Student status helped reduce entrance problem. Familiarity and identification of investigator helped reduce tension.	Students from rural private women's college inside of target area.	Students over-identified with respondents had difficulty adjusting time schedule, were easily influenced by any mishap with leadership, became frustrated by any respondent rejection, needed close supervision.
	2 males/ household	If a female; generally quiet and timid. Male respondents were more open.	1 female/ household	Males tended to be less open.	1 female/ household	Night visits limited.
Questions	Focused on reasons for using certain materials and self-analysis	Respondents found it difficult to answer self-evaluation of choice and value when asked directly.	Introduction focused on using findings to help others. . . . Projective techniques.	Introduction provided a feeling of worth and interest, although the process showing how findings would be fed back was questioned constantly. . . . Projection allowed families to talk of an "another" specific poor family without admitting some intimate problems.		Respondents voiced objections to (a) term "poor." Said they were "low income." Other respondents said they did not know many poor but knew many low-income families. (b) question regarding salary--one respondent suggested we should ask ranges of income to avoid offense.
Questionnaire	Open-ended	Important for rapport	Open-ended. Various experimental types including pictures.	Too lengthy, but allowed involved. Pictures extremely helpful technique but timely (need time for revision and interpretation). Provided change of pace since they required less thought.	Mixed open-ended (some structure and some short answer)	Successful for our purposes. Adopted for final study.
Mode of access to homes	Through agency	Respondents answered "agency line." Too cooperative.	Through self-selection. Each respondent (referer asked to "open doors" by calling, etc.)	Respondents do not like to give a friend's name to strangers, were hesitant and fearful.	Self selection (referer identified).	Same as in Pretest II
			Self selection (referer's name withheld).	Arouses suspicion since source of legitimation is interviewer's word.	Self selection (referer not identified).	High rejection rate. Respondents insisted on knowing who referred them but did not mind referring others.
			Door to door.	Time consuming, etc. High percentage of rejections.		
Equipment	Tape recorder	Recorder unobtrusive, but not hidden, offered no handicaps	Tape recorder	Same as in Pretest I	Tape recorder	Same as in Pretest II Some cassette tapes were damaged--should be checked before each interview by randomly running through entire tape.
			Writing out responses.	Lost time, wording and much valuable information.		

which had to have maximum freedom to evaluate and propose the problem situation, preferential behavior, and the circumstances, without any infiltration, suggestion, or direction from the interviewer (Rosenberg, 1953; Solomon, 1957).

In response to the above needs, the method adopted was a very loosely structured open-ended interview in which the respondent was presented, not with a question about values, but with a situation to which he could react--with his value orientations to be derived from the analysis of his reaction.

The power relationship was seen as an important factor in establishing ad hoc rapport. Feeling powerless in the hands of the interviewer, the poor will respond with distortion. Salesmen utilize a variety of techniques well adapted to this power-powerless psychology which was carefully considered for the purposes of this study and later reinforced by project results.

Handbooks for salesmen and market research training manuals (see Newman, Preston) suggested that salesmen are accepted into homes and invited to return. A housewife can speak in hasty tones to the salesman, kick him out at suppertime, tell him to come back when she wishes, and generally control the relationship in her perspective (Puerta, 1968).

Experience in the pretests subsequently indicated that interviews with low-income respondents were often marked by wariness, suspicion, and fear of reprisal by authority. Even where rapport was apparently high, there was a marked tendency to give conventional, ingratiating replies. Some way had to be found to so establish credibility between interviewer and respondent that the truth--ugly or not--could be reported.

The aforementioned observations clarified the need for indigenous interviewers, or, at least for interviewers such as young students or others who do not pose a threat to respondents.

Both equipment and transportation were included in this careful sensitizing process.

Since pretests had indicated that respondents were not distracted by the use of unobtrusive (but not hidden) tape recorders, this superior means of recording data was used to supplement written records of the interviewers.

The desire to maintain rapport with the respondents even affected the means of transportation used by study personnel. After some initial bad experiences, college fleet vehicles were replaced by more modest personal automobiles of the lower-income interviewers and by rented Volkswagens.

Data Collection-Field Work

Reconnaissance: Reaching the Community

Community input and researcher-community relationships are at their peak during this stage. If the study was to be involved in community development, although only in a limited sense, it was necessary to define the principles under which the study would function with community development orientations. These were the basis of contact with all community residents:

1. Educational rather than adversary relationships would be fostered with emphasis on creating awareness, opening routes to resources, fostering communication, etc.

2. The researchers would not interfere with or become a part of (except as temporary consultant) any community organization or agency.
3. Community leadership was to be kept informed of progress and findings

For the purpose of this study, leaders were sought (reconnaissance) in part to provide information leading to respondents, in part to provide legitimation for the project in official circles in the community, and in part to provide linkages for feedback from the research to the community.

The community development process sometimes known as "studying your community" overlaps with this research process of reconnaissance in that the same types of activities are required for both (Diagram 1). For maximum community development effectiveness, given first, a time span of three months in the county and second, one researcher contacting the leadership, the concept of leadership was redefined ("wedged open") to include two specific subtypes of leaders: (1) "generators"[9] to guarantee the on-going use of our study's community input, and (2) "class-links" to funnel information from the poor to middle class and visa versa.

Seeking out the "generator" and "class link" required some increase in time expenditure but not a diversion from the reconnaissance activities and thereby can be interpreted as an appendage to a research process (Diagram 1).

Nineteen informal and professional community leaders, identified through progressive nomination, were individually interviewed in their homes by the research specialist.

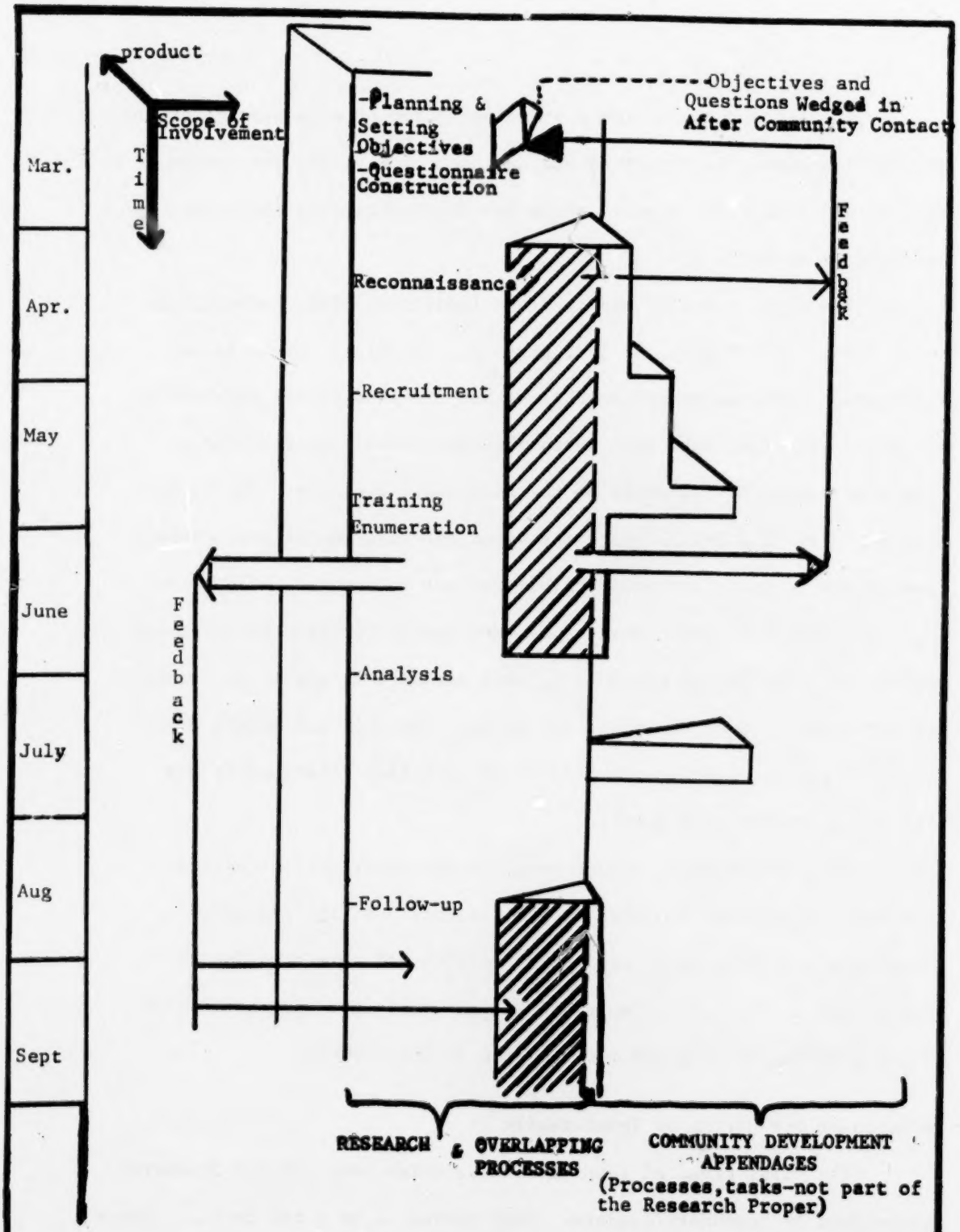


Diagram 1.--The R-CD Model: Process, Chronology and Resource Expenditure for Neighbors Helping Neighbors Study.

The latter can be viewed as an extension of a university system and the leadership as a part of the community social service system. With this distinction in mind, there was an input/output interchange as outlined in Table 2.

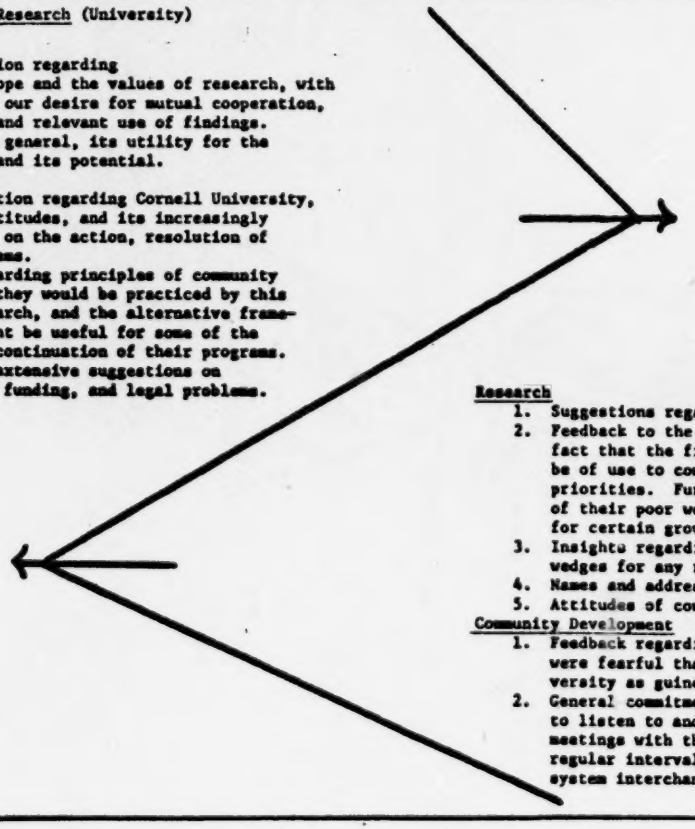
Two major types of middle-class leadership links found in the rural county are illustrated in Diagram 2. The first worked in an institution (such as school or church) but provided direct services to the poor. She (he) knew them personally and served the function of funneling community resources to the individual families. The second also employed in a formal system provided services to the poor through involvement in voluntary projects but did not relate personally with the low-income families. Both types were deeply involved in voluntary activities. The former provided initial contacts to low-income families and appeared to be an existing link between the poor and middle class community groups although the purpose of that link relationship was utilized primarily as a funnel.

All had positive, though sometimes paternalistic, attitudes toward the low-income families in their county. At the end of these interviews some felt that low-income families had strengths (which they wished to learn of in more detail) and could perhaps participate in the planning of programs for the poor in that county.

Recruitment and Hiring of Interviewers

The first group of interviewers selected were college students recommended by community leaders. This proved to be a bad choice. Since the college students in a small university of the rural area are very susceptible to rumors, professional community opinions, and react

Table 2.--Two System Interchange: Information and Commitment (Potential Energy) Flows.



Research (University)

Research

1. Informal education regarding
   a. Purpose, scope and the values of research, with emphasis on our desire for mutual cooperation, follow-up, and relevant use of findings.
   b. Research in general, its utility for the community, and its potential.

Community Development

1. General information regarding Cornell University, its changing attitudes, and its increasingly strong emphasis on the action, resolution of community problems.
2. Information regarding principles of community development as they would be practiced by this particular research, and the alternative frameworks which might be useful for some of the leaders in the continuation of their programs.
3. Ad hoc but not extensive suggestions on organizational, funding, and legal problems.

Community

Research

1. Suggestions regarding wording of some questions.
2. Feedback to the questionnaire, i.e. it was determined that the fact that the first three questions on the questionnaire would be of use to community groups by helping them focus on problems priorities. Furthermore, knowing the strengths and coping pattern of their poor would serve a necessary attitudinal confrontation for certain groups.
3. Insights regarding best use of findings and community development wedges for any research follow-up.
4. Names and addresses of families--the poor by reputation.
5. Attitudes of community professional leadership regarding the poor.

Community Development

1. Feedback regarding communities view of university role (i.e., leaders were fearful that the poor were constantly being used by the university as guinea pigs and research experiments).
2. General commitment and interest on the part of voluntary leadership to listen to and utilize findings. Arrangements were made for meetings with the county planning board; these would take place at regular intervals in order to provide for the continuation of system interchanges.

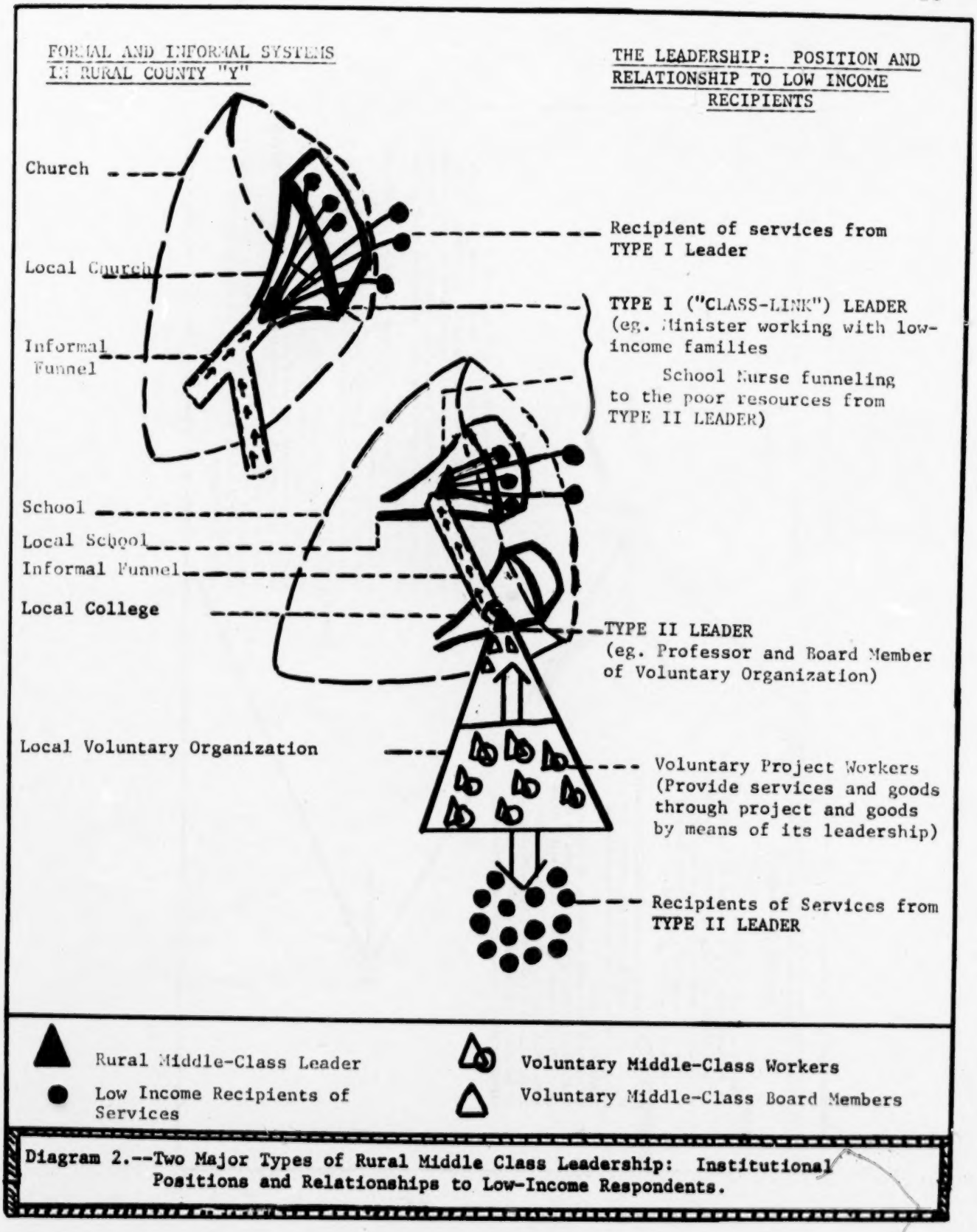

FORMAL AND INFORMAL SYSTEMS IN RURAL COUNTY "Y"
THE LEADERSHIP: POSITION AND RELATIONSHIP TO LOW INCOME RECIPIENTS
Church
Local Church
Informal Funnel
Recipient of services from TYPE I Leader
TYPE I ("CLASS-LINK") LEADER (eg. Minister working with low-income families
School Nurse funneling to the poor resources from TYPE II LEADER)
School
Local School
Informal Funnel
Local College
TYPE II LEADER (eg. Professor and Board Member of Voluntary Organization)
Local Voluntary Organization
Voluntary Project Workers (Provide services and goods through project and goods by means of its leadership)
Recipients of Services from TYPE II LEADER
Rural Middle-Class Leader
Low Income Recipients of Services
Voluntary Middle-Class Workers
Voluntary Middle-Class Board Members

Diagram 2.--Two Major Types of Rural Middle Class Leadership: Institutional Positions and Relationships to Low-Income Respondents.

emotionally to temporary "waves," they function erratically and can hold up the data collection process at any point where the community development process runs into problems.

A second review of the research criteria and community development principles guiding us indicated that the greatest benefits would accrue from the hiring and training of the low-income families themselves. They could also provide additional input for the research. (See Table 3 for problems and recommendations in working with low-income families.) Furthermore, experimental or communications studies indicated that self references to previous relationship with audience, reference to previous personal experience with the subject of the message, the use of recipient information, and the use of testimony by authorities, all are necessary components for conveying credibility (Anderson, 1961). Obviously the low-income interviewer would be best suited as interviewer for a study of this nature.

The reputational technique, utilized in finding the community leaders and subsequently in finding other poor families was used to recruit interviewers. Thus families were visited and/or interviewed in their homes. They had been described by some leaders as"poor" . . . "uncooperative," having "too much pride, (yet) bright or smart" or by the poor as "really hard up" . . . "(unable) to keep their head above water, especially recently" . . . "really needing the money," etc.

Five were hired the first week, seven were interviewed the second week and hired the third week (six investigators and one field coordinator).

A particularly significant aspect of this approach, with possible vocational education value was the resulting list of reasons for rejection

Table 3.--Problems and Techniques in Employing Low-Income Rural Researchers.

Problem	Technique: Successful	Technique: Unsuccessful
Location of the rural non-farm poor (they are scattered, perhaps pocketed inside middle class areas; many show no visible indication of poverty).	Self selection ("low-income" and/or "interested low-income workers"). Reputation through persons working directly with the poor in communities, e.g. well-known advocates, school and public health nurses, some ministers (e.g. those having A.A. meetings in their parish involving low-income families in projects). Extension projects (ENEP, 4-H).	Self selection as "poor". Reputation method through: (a) Volunteer organizations (formal channels). (b) Social service leadership. (c) Ministers providing general charity services. (d) Medical professionals and other professionals working in area. (e) College students. (f) Public health nurses (through the formal channels).
Communication (initial distrust, fear, pride, etc.).	Legitimation through the poor, nurses, ministers. Visit for enjoyment, and not only study purposes. Provide ample power leeway (could throw you out if they so wish). Using small volkswagon or own car for transportation.	Self legitimation. Legitimation through welfare, extension.* Not giving sources of recommendation. Driving in fleet cars marked "official." *Extension workers had to be guaranteed confidentially. We could not say who had referred us. Legitimation was therefore difficult.
Hiring. They did not initially want this type of work because of: (a) Suspicion of research projects and universities (what would be done with findings? Who was doing the study? What was it for? Was the government involved?)	(a) Entire process explained including origin of research; how researcher became involved, her role and the worker's role. Job also made meaningful to low-income community, with prestige and would result in a concrete service. Pertinent data findings--guaranteed to be shared with respondents. (b) Questionnaire construction limited, no direct question of intimate nature. Respondents also to feel participation in a service to the community. Interviewers trained to prevent over exposure of respondent and shared this with respondents. (c) Names and addresses only known by workers. I would record them by number and letter codes. (d) Show workers interviewing process by interviewing them--have them practice on their job-personal-at home training initial selection of friends and acquaintances.	Offering large salary with no incentive. Not explaining HOW data will be shared. Asking direct detailed questions on income (has the sanction of taboo). Referring to the family as "poor."
They were also concerned about the following: -- Limited time -- Children -- Transportation	Could interview at their own hours. Set their own minimum goal for the week. Having them raise their goal (realistically) in accordance with their increasing security. (The best time for initial goal setting is after their first days of interviewing.)	Not setting a minimum goal or setting a goal (a) without first getting their self appraisal; (b) before interviewing them.
Employment. The following problems could be anticipated during employment period: -- Literacy -- Personal crises Children-sudden illness Ego (insecurity-initial) Marital (husband competing for time) Time (interference with schedules) -- Welfare bureaucracy (did not make work worthwhile) -- Over abundance of applicants for jobs (a result of successful participation). -- Over involvement with problems.	Tape recordings limited written work. No time limit regarding calls or communication. Help resolve by providing referral, orientation and even helping get service resources. Hire a low-income coordinator from area (preferably a male with supervisory experience but unable to work because of illness) to deliver tapes, equipment, make long distance calls, etc. Set up a petty cash system to provide advance money for gasoline and telephone expenses, and temporary loans. None (recipient can keep entire check for transportation expenses) Get names and refer to next researcher.	
Equipment (problem is with curiosity of children and desire to use recorders at times for personal enjoyment).	Provide a free cassette tape for training purposes. Emphasize cost of equipment and respect for their ability to handle equipment.	
Gossip	Hiring low-income workers. Emphasizing confidentiality.	Hiring: (a) Working middle class residents to study poor families, especially in their own area. (b) Any person with established organizational regular information inputs into the community at large.

or acceptance of this employment possibility. It suggests that motivation, satisfaction, self assurance in necessary skills and reputation of employer are important considerations, even for the poor, before accepting employment.

However, after the second week of field work, the low-income respondents themselves began requesting work. The interviewers were walking newspapers, advertising their satisfaction with the work, the hours and other work conditions, in addition to verifying that "it could be done."

Training of Interviewers

The questionnaire was personally administered to each worker in his/her home. This method provided two positive functions. First, the informal, familiar atmosphere at the interviewers' "home ground" removed many of their initial fears and permitted their intermittent involvement in necessary household activities. Second, experience in being both respondent and interviewer provided the opportunity for familiarization with both roles.

All interviews would be recorded on tape as were role playing sessions which the trainees would undertake with friends and family. The use of tapes served several purposes:

1. To facilitate the training.
2. To yield more descriptive data.
3. To overcome any educational handicaps (writing, spelling, grammar), which might affect a written record.
4. To discourage fudging of data.

There were initial problems in the handling of equipment, lack of familiarity with recorders, and fear of "having something so expensive in the house . . . with the kids and the dog." One helpful solution was

to provide an extra demonstration tape to each interviewer for personal and recreational use (family singing and talking into tape). In addition to alleviating fears, it led to supervised use of recorder by the children and in some cases generated entertainment and a healthy family atmosphere. Although there remained the risk of breakage, only one, out of thirteen, recorders needed repairing when the study terminated.

Each low-income interviewer was trained for a minimum of three hours, with follow-up visits, review of their tapes, motivational relationships, and ad hoc problem resolutions.

On-the-job training proved highly efficient in this manner, eliminating the need for close personal supervision. Furthermore, the resulting nervous tension created with the presence of a supervisor was replaced by self criticism. This type of self evaluation holds a great deal of potential in the changing of attitudes. When the supervisor arrived, interviewers would ask: "Is this all right?" with their own conceptual framework regarding the right and wrong methods, yet with a willingness to hear the tape and the supervisor's review.

Initially it is imperative that the workers be visited at very short intervals, after each of the first few days' work. Insecurity and tensions could then be quickly cathected to positive employee practices, and reassurance and other ego reinforcement could be concretely focused with the aid of tapes--an important note in training low-income families, where there is a need for this psychological first aid and there abstract praises may not necessarily be believed.

After the first training sessions, informal discussions about community problems and programs, solutions of respondents' and leadership roles were initiated by both research specialist and interviewers. The

former had a variety of roles in these settings, including those of catalyst, link-strengthener and educator. She reinforced, whenever possible, positive relationships and images of community leaders known as dynamic helpers to the poor.

Enumeration

A total of 155 interviews were completed of which 137 transcripts were eventually usable. The low-income interviewers--sensitive to families with the same economic problems--reported attitudes, set-backs, and their evaluation of the study's success. They were given lee-way in suggesting changes even in questionnaire format. As a result, section II of the questionnaire was changed to include items they considered "necessary."

Concrete short-cuts, helpful hints, and the emphasis to poor individual respondents that they had something to contribute were some of the benefits of this approach.

In addition, low-income interviewers, hitherto having limited (a) communication with other poor people, (b) self esteem, (c) accessibility to prestige symbols, (d) ability to meet and converse with strangers and (e) inclination to analyze poverty were now "working for Cornell University" as research investigators, and becoming aware of poverty as a "normal" rather than unique situation. Moreover, they were exchanging ideas and attitudes with an increasing number of peers on a weekly basis.

There developed a sense of general peer awareness which was verbalized most clearly at the first group meeting. Until that point workers were given instructions, equipment and materials individually and at their homes. In that individualization involved expenditure of

time by the researcher, it might be considered an appendage to current methodology for training and general handling of field-worker problems. (See list of problems and recommendations in Table 3.) It did involve increased time and transportation costs but the contribution of indigenous field workers to the validity of responses is best shown by one respondent who shared that she had recently been interviewed by some college person and had lied all the way through.

Follow-Up

Group Meeting with Respondents

They considered follow-up an essential part of their work. Because of a strong feeling that much of the information could not be disseminated through ordinary mass communications media, the means of dissemination was left for a broader discussion of the study's value after field work was completed.

Following the first summarizations of the collected data, a meeting was held with the interviewers to review the data and to get their impressions. This meeting was held primarily for community development purposes and represents a step beyond that usually performed by researchers.

As a result of their research involvement, and several group sessions, interviewers agreed to meet with middle-class leadership in order to share their impressions of the findings and for a general preliminary report.

They were initially hesitant to take this step fearing reprisals. Some felt it would be a sign of ingratitude. Only after clarifying their roles, providing self assurances as a group and agreeing to insist on a clear agenda would they proceed.

The First Respondent-Leadership Interaction

That meeting not only successfully reinforced interviewers' awareness and identity as rural poor but also provided them with group and class recognition of their newly acquired status. One interviewer was able to admit that she had never wanted to say "I am poor," yet at that moment she wished to declare it. Another interviewer stated that because she had been so terrified of attending the meeting, she had sat in the car for two hours before making her final decision. She could have returned home.

Middle-class leadership was carefully chosen beforehand. Two leaders (the "generators") would guarantee follow-up meetings of the interviewer group and their preparation for community involvement. All were anxious to meet and hear from the poor and from the many other poor families the interviewers were indirectly representing and could now contact. Moreover, they had to face the poor in their new role of research investigators rather than solely as recipients of a service.

Arrangements were made for a second research project to enter the county utilizing interviewers and agreeing to hire and train additional workers. It would utilize content finding of our study so that the helpful hints gathered by an original audience could be disseminated.

In that this second study was interested in testing the tape recorder as a mass communications media, it provided the groundwork for continuation of our initial efforts. The audience would receive other messages in addition to those of helpful hints, messages geared toward creating awareness and civic participation.

Conclusions

The approaches used in this study are clearly unconventional and their value should be the subject of some debate. Based on our experience, we offer the following conclusions:

Snowball Sampling

Use of this technique limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Since there is no assurance that the sample is representative of any particular larger universe, it cannot be used to describe a larger population with any certainty. Since the technique is based on nomination, it may well yield a population biased in a particular way.

On the other hand, this approach is economical in the sense that a very high proportion of interviewing time is spent with respondents who meet the criteria of the study. Its most important value, however, is the legitimation of the interviewer in the eyes of the respondent, which is the result of being referred by someone the latter respects. This is crucial in studies of the poor or other dependent or alienated groups, and--in our judgment--is essential in a study of this type.

Lack of Structure

The problems associated with processing data yielded by open-ended interviews are too well known to need rehearsing here. Production of transcriptions and coding of the interviews did constitute a problem and the analysis is still not completed. On the other hand, we have data largely unshaped by our prior assumptions about the values or communications behavior of the poor.

Use of Indigenous Interviewers

This has to be rated--in our judgment--as an unqualified success. For our part, we achieved credibility with the respondents and got usable and valid data. The interviewers received much-needed income and considerable ego-reinforcement--neither return a bad thing for the poor. The community received a certain input of leadership development. Any vague fears we may have had that interviewers and respondents would collude to provide invalid data or that data would be unusable were dispelled earlier.

Incorporation of Community Development Objectives

The incorporation of objectives beyond those inherent in the research itself provided a potential distraction of resources. Pursuing the development purpose consumed time after the field work was completed. On the other hand, some of the necessary legitimation for the research effort in the community also served development purposes. And, in a problem area as urgent as this, failure to capitalize on the time invested and the lessons learned would be very hard to justify.

There is no question that the results were biased by the incorporation of these "added" purposes. They were biased in the sense that the people of the community saw a purpose for the study and responded by giving a greater cooperation than we would have gotten otherwise. We believe that this led to more--and more valid--data.

What we did here was not as revolutionary as it might seem. Any study that is not completely surreptitious has an effect on the population studied. We simply tried to harness that effect to a good cause.

Theoretical Implications for Practice: Hypotheses and Gaps

The Rural Indigenous Worker

1. That population best equipped in interviewing the rural marginal non-farm poor are their peers.
2. Because of rural values attributed to "working, not being poor and minding your own business," this population is difficult to reach and does not accept being referred to as poor. They are generally working in seasonal employment and with salaries insufficient to meet their family needs.
3. Because of voluntary or charity organizations, and an internal social security system, they manage to barely survive. (Other characteristics have been brought out in findings though these are still in the process of analysis.)

Research and Community Development

1. In planning and completing a research study there are some activities which, if carefully defined and directed, overlap with the community development process. There are other activities which might require the extension of time, labor or capital but not the diversion of these resources. Moreover, this extension can have positive repercussions in terms of the validity of data.
2. In the goal development of a research study on low-income families, community development goals can be added without sacrificing original research objectives.

3. Adding community development goals will mean first that at each point of natural overlap, e.g. training interviewers, both the research and the community development goals can be fulfilled and second that some added resources may have to be expended but these are for the most part natural appendums to or expansion of the original activities not different activities.
4. When the research process is held constant, the nature of involvement in the community development process will vary according to the resources available.
5. Data collection hitherto generally a mechanical phase in research studies with an emphasis on error and contamination reduction can be utilized as a positive, functional (to the community) tool for enriching university-community relations, developing leadership among unaffiliated families and creating positive class linkages.

The Need for Further Research

There still remain several questions to be explored:

1. How do values and cultural patterns influence the use of the R-CD Model?
2. Can the model be utilized with research studies which have (a) respondent populations varying in income, degree of rurality, etc.; (b) more limited and/or controversial social research questions (e.g. community power structure); (c) very limited capital resources?

Recommendations for Practical Application

Research studies with low-income audiences should maximize their contribution to the respondent community, during the course of that study. For example, universities can carry out social research studies in a planned setting such as that recommended in Table 4.

Studies with low-income audiences utilizing the R-CD Model must be sensitive to the multiple returns on the following key relationships: interviewer-respondent; university-community; middle income-low income residents; leadership controlling and distributing services-community recipients (consumers); rural conservative-researcher (outsider); inside liberal conservative-inside moderate conservative; inside liberal conservative-researcher (outsider).

Some Last Thought

The research process permits the initiation of a community development process marked by education; building linkages from the poor to other poor as well as to the middle class social service workers (voluntary and public). It also creates an awareness of broader community economic problems, enlarges their reference scopes by means of one-to-one personal relationships, and therefore establishes a base for attitudinal changes with regard to poverty.

The R-CD Model functions within the rural, small voluntary institutional framework of a rural area, not interfering with their established programs, and attempting instead to capitalize on that accepted leadership which has linked between the poor and the middle class. This model is conservative and amenable to adoption within rural areas.

Table 4.--Planning Social Research: Applications of the R-CD Model.

Number (in order of appearance in community)	Possible Subject Matter for Studies	Possible Community Development Goals Utilizing the R-CD Model
Research I	Values, attitudes, behavioral patterns	Linking economic classes and creating community awareness, stimulating new leadership
Research II	Communication, adoption and diffusion of messages, use of tape recorders, social and other services to the poor	Providing information from first study to community, informing community regarding service, reinforcing new leadership, development of low-income leaders, preparing new leadership for community involvement with middle class leadership
Research III	Leadership, middle-low income relationships in community meetings	Training of low-income, stimulating new leadership, linking economic classes

The research planning process and its findings become part of the information input to the institutional workers as well as to the poor, thus further multiplying the effects of this model.

When the researcher leaves this county, there will be more than researcher-community residual contamination, or input into one institution. In directing that relationship, and focusing the effects on the poor, this study and perhaps others will be one more tool in our common efforts to eliminate poverty and its indignities in rural areas.

Footnotes

[1]The study was part of a Northeast Regional Project (NE-68) "Paths Out of Poverty" sponsored by the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Department of Education.

[2]This name was suggested by one family during pretest and later adopted. It suggested to them that they were participants in community betterment. Though a first step, it was to represent our attitude during every phase; critical self analysis and flexibility with specific research focuses (i.e., what non-biased adaptations could be made to insure the relevance of this study for the community?).

[3]Leaders are contacted for their cooperation in reaching the sample; in order to avoid confrontation with other studies, etc.

[4]"Most of the problems of observation in behavioral science (and some problems of theorizing too) stem from the shared humanity of the scientist and his subject matter. . . ." (Kaplan, 1964).

[5]Piggy-backing: the informal practice in research studies whereby questions are added to the original questionnaire, usually for the purpose of obtaining information useful to another researcher, department, etc.

[6]Consistent trends of farm to non-farm employment and population shifts within the rural areas are not adequately reflected in studies on rural poverty and life styles. (See Key, 1961; Kaplan, 1966; Hodgell, 1959; Rogers, 1960 for more details regarding rural changes.)

[7]Formal leadership: "One who commands both positional and personal power . . . Personal power is always normative; it is based on the manipulation of symbols and serves to generate commitment to the person who commands it" (Etzioni, 1964). The constituency of this type of leadership is a middle or sometimes upper class population. However this leader has actual or potential class linkage functions because of his activities with the poor.

[8]This snowball sampling method had several handicaps. We sacrificed inferential for descriptive and exploratory objectives. Our emphasis was on the validity, richness and frankness of responses.

[9]This concept was defined and developed by Puerta, 1971 where it is differentiated from traditional roles of "catalyst" and "energizer."

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